



OCTOBER 2015



LARAMIE REGION

“Conserving Wildlife - Serving People”

## Pheasant hunters welcome season



Pheasant hunters welcomed the 2015 season with the Springer Special Pheasant Hunt in October. Hunters continue to express appreciation for the annual hunt. Now that the regular season is open, pheasants will be stocked at the Springer, Glendo, and Table Mountain WHMAs and at the following Walk-In Areas: Goshen County #19, 29 and 63, Platte County #20 and 23, and Laramie County # 21 and 34. This year's pheasant crop at the Downer Game Bird Farm was excellent and there are about 16,000 birds available to hunters. Cover for pheasants is incredible this year thanks to abundant moisture during the growing season. Overall, it's shaping up to be a great year for pheasant hunters in southeast Wyoming.

## WGFD seeking tips on elk poaching

Laramie Game Warden Brooke Weaver received a call about two bull elk that had been shot and left on private property off Roger Canyon Road. Meat was taken from one animal and the other remained untouched.

Using a metal detector, Warden Weaver recovered bullets from both elk. The bullets are currently being analyzed and the case is still under investigation. The elk were most likely killed sometime between Oct. 21 and 24. Anyone with information is asked to call the Stop Poaching Tip Line at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847). Tips may also be reported online at <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>. Informants can choose to remain anonymous and may be eligible for a reward for information leading to an arrest.





## Long-distance shot results in abandonment fine

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood reported on a incident of a Cheyenne man who took a few shots at a pronghorn antelope from approximately 400 yards away, thinking they were about half that distance. When no animal fell immediately, the man left the area. A passerby watched as a gut-shot doe separated itself from the herd and died.

The shooter returned to town and took his rifle to a gunsmith for cleaning and bore-sighting before Sherwood located him. The man later pleaded guilty to a charge of waste of a game animal and paid a \$420 fine. Sherwood would like to remind hunters to follow up on every shot and remember they are responsible for every bullet, from the time it leaves the muzzle of their firearm until it is (hopefully) buried in the safe backstop beyond their target.



## Mule Creek Ranch Public Access Area opens for elk

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) partnered with private landowners to provide 15 years of public elk hunting access to the Mule Creek Ranch located in northern Albany County.

Historically, the lack of access in elk Hunt Area 7 has been a limiting factor to managing elk populations. The elk population in Hunt Areas 7 and 19 (Laramie Peak/Muddy Mountain Herd Unit) has been over objective for many years. The Mule Creek Public Access Area (PAA) agreement will run for 15 years, allowing wildlife managers to better manage wildlife populations toward objective in this area.

The Mule Creek PAA is open only for elk hunting in Hunt Area 7. For the 2015 hunting season, access will commence Nov. 30. Beginning in 2016, access will be open Nov. 1, allowing for bull harvest as well. All hunting, including game retrieval, shall be on foot or horseback only. Motor vehicle travel is only allowed on the Mule Creek Road (Albany County Road 64) and on the road to the parking area.

Permission slips to hunt the Mule Creek PAA are issued on a first-

come, first-served basis and become available Friday mornings at 8 a.m. approximately 10 (ten) days prior to the start of each permission slip period. Hunters must obtain permission slips through the Game and Fish Department's Private Lands Public Wildlife system.

Twenty (20) permission slips are available to hunt antlerless elk with unused Type 1, 4 or 6 licenses for each of the following periods: Nov. 30-Dec. 6 (permission slips available Nov. 20); Dec. 7-13 (permission slips available Nov. 27); Dec. 14-20 (Dec. 4); and Dec. 21-31 (Dec. 11). In addition, 20 permission slips are available to hunt antlerless elk with unused Type 7 licenses for each of the following periods: January 1-10 (Dec. 18); Jan. 11-17 (Jan. 1); Jan 18-24 (Jan. 8), and Jan. 25-31 (Jan. 15).

While hunting, each hunter must have a completed permission slip on their person and each vehicle must have a visible vehicle identification slip. A complete listing of ranch rules can be found online at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov). For more information call the Laramie Regional office at (307) 745-4046.



### SUCCESSFUL HUNT

The Taylor family had a successful hunt in the Snowy Range. The Taylors are members of Muley Fanatics and volunteer their time to improve mule deer habitat in the Platte Valley.



### FIELD EXPERIENCE

From left, Saratoga Wildlife Biologist Will Schultz, University of Wyoming wildlife student Nicole Reed and Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton conduct a big game check station at the Forest Service office in Saratoga. (Photo by Monte Schultz, age 7.)



## “King of the Mountain” moose

South Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar said the September 1 big game archery opener in the Snowy Range is usually uneventful from a game warden's perspective. But as it turned out, this one was a little more exciting.

After checking mostly unsuccessful moose hunters, Warden Brinegar stopped by a truck parked along the highway that had been there most of the morning. He decided to head into the woods and look for the hunter. He somehow managed to walk right up to the hunter and his impressive trophy.

The hunter humbly admitted it was luck - not skill - that helped him bag this beautiful beast. While in pursuit of the same bull, several other hunters unknowingly spooked the King of the Mountain directly into his path.

## Big game seasons underway in southeast Wyoming

Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak said big game hunting in Laramie County and Pole Mountain cranked up to full speed in October.

The weather was cooperative in October for ease of travel, but at times it was almost too warm to hunt big game. Antler and horn production has been notable this year, partially due to the high amounts forage production following above-average precipitation through much of the summer. The mule deer shown at right was harvested in hunt area 59 and is a nice example of antler production in many areas of southeast Wyoming this year.

Most hunters seemed pleased with the amount and quality of big game animals they saw in the field. Warden Blajszczak said overall, hunters obeyed the rules fairly well, minus a few notable exceptions.



## Post-season meetings in Cheyenne and Laramie

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department will hold two public meetings to hear comments and suggestions from hunters regarding the recent big game hunting seasons. The purpose of these meetings is to collect comments and suggestions from the public to help wildlife managers develop season setting proposals for the 2016 hunting season. These proposals will then be presented and available for public comment in late March 2016.

There will be two meetings in the Laramie Region. Both will be held concurrently at **9 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 21** at the following locations: **Cheyenne:** Elk Room at the Game and Fish Headquarters, 5400 Bishop Blvd. **Laramie:** Game and Fish Office, 528 S. Adams St. For more information call the Laramie office at (307) 745-4046.



## Vegetation looks great in Platte Valley

Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton reports that the 2015 growing season was exceptional in the North Platte River Valley.

The photo at left shows the unusual height and density of grasses on the Pennock Wildlife Habitat Management Area, east of Saratoga. This WHMA is managed for elk and deer winter range. The abundance of grass and other forage should help the big game animals put on the fat they need to help them survive the harsh winter ahead.



## Hawk Springs Reservoir rebounding from drought

The Laramie Fisheries Management Crew has some good news about Hawk Springs Reservoir.

Biologists sampled Hawk Springs Reservoir in October to see how the fish populations are doing. They use a GPS unit to drop gill nets in the same location each year to obtain consistent data.

They also check water temperature and depth. Water in the center of the reservoir, that is usually about 4 feet deep when the reservoir is sampled in the fall, was 21 feet deep this year. And, as any fish biologist will tell you, more water equals more fish.

"This is the second year of good water in

this reservoir and we are seeing improvements," said Fish Biologist Lee McDonald.

The walleye are growing nicely, with one measuring more than 24 inches long and weighing 7.76 pounds. "They were real skinny back about 2009 when there wasn't a lot of water," McDonald said. "We were con-

cerned back then, but now we are getting bigger fish and have better forage for them."

The walleye feed on the gizzard shad, which are also reported to be doing well in Hawk Springs Reservoir.

"The walleye aren't skinny anymore," McDonald said.



## Large trout await anglers at Wheatland Reservoir #3



Fish biologists and a few enthusiastic volunteers sampled Wheatland Reservoir #3. The largest rainbow trout was 21 inches and about 4.4 pounds. Brown trout averaged about 23 inches, with the largest fish measuring 25 inches and weighing 6.3 pounds. There were also plenty of walleye, with the average fish about 17.3 inches and the largest coming in at 21.8 inches and weighing 4.7 pounds. It's no wonder biologists report that fishing has been great for anglers at Wheatland #3 this fall.



## Game and Fish offers anglers a chance to catch Golden trout close to home



The Wyoming Game and Fish Department stocked 700 nine-inch golden trout in Crystal Reservoir in October. The fish are from Ten Sleep Fish Hatchery and were extras from a brood recruitment lot reared for the brood stock at Story Fish Hatchery. This is the first time Crystal Reservoir has been stocked with golden trout.

"These golden trout will provide anglers with an opportunity to catch this unique species close to home without a strenuous hike to an alpine lake," said Robin Kepple, Laramie Region information specialist with the Game and Fish Department. In 2014, the Game and Fish Department also stocked 1,150 golden trout in 10 ponds in the Pole Mountain area between Laramie and Cheyenne. Golden trout are native to California and have been introduced to many alpine lakes in Wyoming. Golden trout are readily caught with spinning, bait and fly-fishing gear.



## Richardson project completed on the Encampment River

The Richardson Bank Stabilization Project is a habitat improvement project for trout on the lower Encampment River near the town of Riverside.

Severe erosion along the vertical bank on this stretch of the river has resulted in loss of property and sent large amounts of sediment downstream. Sediment fills in the deep pools and spawning areas that trout rely on for shelter and reproduction. The 500-foot project will replace past attempts by landowners to prevent bank erosion by cabling trees to the river bank.

"We have a lot of accelerated stream bank erosion going on here," said Christina Barrineau, aquatic habitat biologist in Laramie. "The short-term fix is not working very well and has not stopped the erosion on the bank. The river is very powerful."

The project involved removing the vertical bank, creating a deeper pool for trout habitat and installing toewood to hold the bank in place and provide additional habitat for trout. Olsen Excavating of Laramie was contracted to do the work.

When the heavy work was done, biologists planted willows and other vegetation along the bank to help hold the soil in place and extend the life of the project.



BEFORE



AFTER

## Tiger muskies stocked in North Crow Reservoir

There is a new predator in Upper North Crow Reservoir, and if you are a patient and determined angler you just might catch one.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department stocked 650 tiger muskies into Upper North Crow Reservoir in October as a biological control to reduce the numbers of longnose suckers and white suckers.

"These fish were stocked to control a very abundant sucker population that has had negative impacts on stocked game fish," said Steve Gale, fish biologist in the Laramie Region. "The suckers compete with the game fish for food and other resources. As a result, growth of rainbow trout and grayling has been slow and fishing has been very slow."

The tiger muskellunge (muskie for short) is a carnivorous fish, and is the sterile hybrid offspring of the true muskellunge (*Esox masquinongy*) and the northern pike (*Esox lucius*). Tiger muskies have been used in other waters in Wyoming to control overpopulated or undesirable fish species.

Trout stocking will be discontinued at Upper North Crow Reservoir to force the tiger muskie to feed on the suckers. But trout anglers shouldn't fret; you can still fish for trout nearby at Crystal and Granite reservoirs in Curt Gowdy State Park. These reservoirs will continue to be stocked with trout each year.

While they are small now – only six to eight inches – the tiger muskies will grow quickly and should reach legal harvestable size of 30 inches within a few years. Fish managers say tiger muskies are difficult to catch but will prove to be an exciting challenge for the determined angler. "These will make a nice trophy fish when they reach the large sizes we are expecting them to obtain at Upper North Crow Reservoir," Gale said.





## Bighorn sheep pasture complete

The fencing project is complete for the new sheep pastures at the Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center at Sybille.

One of the large pastures was split into two different double-fenced pastures to house the sheep. This project has been two years in the making and we're very excited to finally have it complete!

Progress has also been made towards completing the new sheep handling facility. A large part of the chutes inside the building are done. Next the crew will work on installing water lines for the building and pastures, and then complete construction of the alleyways.



*View of the new sheep pasture from above.*



*Modified wing fence for improved sheep handling.*

## Working sheep and modifying pens

Staff at the Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center managed to take a break from construction to handle sheep, sample them for bacteria and trim their hooves.

The pen that currently holds the sheep was not originally designed for bighorn sheep. As a result, it can be very difficult to coax them out of the pen and into the handling building.

In October, the staff built a modified wing fence to make it easier to get sheep out of the pen and into the handling building.

## Habitat and Access crews complete projects

The Laramie Region Habitat and Access crew is charged with caring for department-owned properties such as Table Mountain, Laramie Peak and the Wick/Beumee Wildlife Habitat Management Areas.

In addition to working on projects that directly benefit wildlife, the crew also performs a lot of maintenance work to keep the facilities in good repair.

In Yoder, Habitat and Access Biologist Dericke Lavoine completed maintenance to the Bump-Sullivan Ditch with a pull-behind mower, relocated propane tanks and lines and dug a footer for an addition at the Springer WHMA residence.

The crew also installed new fuel storage tanks at the Laramie Peak WHMA patrol cabin, painted an outhouse that was vandalized earlier this year at the Monolith Public Access Area, and removed boat ramps at the Plains Lakes, Gray-rocks Reservoir and Wheatland Reservoir #1.







## The wild side of life

First-grade students from Snowy Range Academy in Laramie learn about Wyoming's wildlife at a special program held at Curt Gowdy State Park in October.



# FOREVER WILD families



Recent Forever Wild Families graduate Daniel Rivera, left, used his newly-acquired hunting skills to harvest a nice pronghorn antelope on a hunt with friends earlier this fall. Meanwhile, Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak and Conservation Education Specialist Tasha Sorenson took 14-year-old Calvin Webb, at right, out for an antelope hunt on October 27. They hunted on private land owned by Doug and Susan Samuelson in antelope area 38. After missing his first shot at an antelope, Calvin later went afield with Sorenson and South Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar and finally harvested his first-ever antelope. Congratulations to Calvin for making a clean kill, and a huge thank-you to Doug and Susan Samuelson for allowing us to utilize their private land for this Forever Wild Families hunt.

## Lost and found duck

Torrington Game Warden Rob Hipp stopped by the Wellnitz Ponds to check a pair of duck hunters exiting the Springer WHMA.

When Hipp asked what the pair had harvested, the hunters replied, "Well, we were hoping you could tell us!" They produced the usual handful of blue-winged teal and gadwall, and then pulled out a mystery duck. Warden Hipp was not certain of the species so he retrieved his Peterson's Field Guide to Birds from his truck. The field guide suggested that the duck was a hen surf scoter, which is a sea duck rarely seen in Wyoming. Hipp photographed the bird and sent the picture to a graduate student at the University of Wyoming who confirmed that it was indeed a (very lost) surf scoter.



## Young hunter shoots first elk

Twelve-year-old Lane Laborde of Saratoga killed his first elk during a hunt on Pennock Mountain on the last day of the season. Lane shared the special moment with his father, grandfather and brother, who all helped him pack the quarters out of some pretty rough country. Congratulations, Lane!



## Mountain lion avoids trap

During the early morning hours of Oct. 2, a mountain lion attacked two goats at a ranch headquarters on Brush Creek. The goats were part of a small herd employed to control weeds.

Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton set a live trap in an attempt to catch the offending lion, but the animal did not return to the area and was never trapped.

## Mule deer found with arrow in head

Medicine Bow Game Warden Jake Kettley received a call from a landowner about a small mule deer buck with an arrow stuck in its head.

The arrow entered the deer's head just behind the right eye. It apparently didn't hit anything vital and the deer was most likely blind in the eye, but was still walking around and feeding with the whole arrow sticking out of its head.

To prevent the animal suffering from an infection, the decision was made to euthanize it. The meat was donated to a less fortunate family.

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